

What is claimed is:

1. A method of manufacturing glass articles by continuously separating glass gobs from a glass melt flow continuously flowing out of a nozzle and forming the separated glass gobs with glass forming members that are intermittently or continuously moving, characterized in that:

a support member is made to approach the front end of the nozzle, the front end of the glass melt flow is received by the support member, and the support member is dropped more rapidly than the rate of flow of the glass melt flow to separate a glass gob from the glass melt flow;

the separated glass gob is transferred from the support member to a stopped or moving glass forming member to mold a glass article; and

in the case where the glass gob is moved to a stopped glass forming member, the period during which the glass forming member is stopped for transfer of the glass gob from the support member to the glass forming member is made shorter than the period required for one cycle of preparing one glass glob from the glass melt flow using the support member and moving the glass gob to the glass forming member.

2. A method of manufacturing glass articles by continuously separating glass gobs from a glass melt flow continuously flowing out of a nozzle and forming the separated glass gobs with glass forming members that are intermittently or continuously moving, characterized in that:

a support member is made to approach the front end of the nozzle, the front end of the glass melt flow is received by the support member, this front end is supported to form a constriction between the nozzle side and the support side of the glass melt flow, and the support member is dropped to separate the glass gob from the glass melt flow at the constriction;

the separated glass gob is transferred from the support member to a stopped or moving glass forming member to form a glass article; and

in the case where the glass gob is moved to a stopped glass forming member, the period during which the glass forming member is stopped for transfer of the glass gob

from the support member to the glass forming member is made shorter than the period required for one cycle of preparing one glass glob from the glass melt flow using the support member and moving the glass gob to the glass forming member.

3. A method of manufacturing glass articles by continuously separating glass gobs from a glass melt flow continuously flowing out of a nozzle and molding the separated glass gobs with glass forming members that are intermittently or continuously moving, characterized in that:

a support member is made to approach the front end of the nozzle, the front end of the glass melt flow is received by the support member, this front end is supported to form a constriction between the nozzle side and the support side of the glass melt flow, and support of the support member is removed to separate the glass gob from the glass melt flow at the constriction;

the separated glass gob is transferred from the support member to a stopped or moving glass forming member to form a glass article; and

in the case where the glass gob is moved to a stopped glass forming member, the period during which the glass forming member is stopped for transfer of the glass gob from the support member to the glass forming member is made shorter than the period required for one cycle of preparing one glass glob from the glass melt flow using the support member and moving the glass gob to the glass forming member.

4. The manufacturing method according to any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the period during which the glass forming member is stopped for transfer of the glass gob from the support member to the glass forming member, or the time for transferring the glass gob from the support member to a moving glass forming member, is made shorter than the period from when the support member begins to approach the nozzle to when the glass gob has been completely separated.

5. A method of manufacturing glass articles by continuously separating glass gobs from a glass melt flow continuously flowing out of a nozzle and forming the separated

glass gobs with glass forming members that are intermittently or continuously moving, characterized in that:

the step of receiving the front end of the glass melt flow by a support member and dropping the support member more rapidly than the flow rate of the glass melt flow to separate the glass gob is repeated once in a fixed cycle period,

the separated glass gob is transferred from the support member to a stopped or moving glass forming member to mold a glass article; and

in the case where the glass gob is moved to a stopped glass forming member, the period during which the glass forming member is stopped for transfer of the glass gob from the support member to the glass forming member is made less than or equal to 70 percent of the above cycle period.

6. A method of manufacturing glass articles by continuously separating glass gobs from a glass melt flow continuously flowing out of a nozzle and forming the separated glass gobs with glass forming members that are intermittently or continuously moving, characterized in that:

the step of receiving the front end of the glass melt flow by a support member, supporting this front end to form a constriction between the nozzle side and the support side of the glass melt flow, and dropping the support member to separate the glass gob from the glass melt flow at the constriction is repeated once in a fixed cycle period,

the separated glass gob is transferred from the support member to a stopped or moving glass forming member to mold a glass article; and

in the case where the glass gob is moved to a stopped glass forming member, the period during which the glass forming member is stopped for transfer of the glass gob from the support member to the glass forming member is made less than or equal to 70 percent of the above cycle period.

7. A method of manufacturing glass articles by continuously separating glass gobs from a glass melt flow continuously flowing out of a nozzle and forming the separated glass gobs with glass forming members that are intermittently or continuously moving, characterized in that:

the step of receiving the front end of the glass melt flow by a support member, supporting this front end to form a constriction between the nozzle side and the support side of the glass melt flow, and removing support from the support member to separate the glass gob from the glass melt flow at the constriction is repeated once in a fixed cycle period,

the separated glass gob is transferred from the support member to a stopped or moving glass forming member to form a glass article; and

in the case where the glass gob is moved to a stopped glass forming member, the period during which the glass forming member is stopped for transfer of the glass gob from the support member to the glass forming member is made less than or equal to 70 percent of the above cycle period.

8. The manufacturing method according to any of claims 1 to 7, wherein the surface receiving the glass gob of the support member is a flat surface and this flat surface is rotated 360° to transfer the glass gob to the glass forming member.

9. The manufacturing method according to any of claims 1 to 8, wherein the surface of the support member receiving the glass gob is tilted to cause the glass gob to fall off, thereby transferring the glass gob to the glass forming member, and the direction of the fall of the glass gob is consistent with the direction of movement of the glass forming member.

10. The manufacturing method according to any of claims 1 to 9, wherein two consecutively produced glass gobs are separated by receiving the glass melt flow on two different surfaces of the support member.

11. The manufacturing method according to any of claims 1 to 10, wherein, in the course of transferring the glass gob from the support member to the glass forming member, the glass gob is turned upside down.

12. The manufacturing method according to any of claims 1 to 11, wherein gas is blown from the surface of the support member receiving the front end of the glass melt flow when receiving this front end.
13. The manufacturing method according to any of claims 1 to 12, wherein the glass article is a preform for press molding comprised of optical glass.
14. A method of manufacturing optical elements, characterized in that a glass article obtained by the manufacturing method according to claim 13 is heat softened and then press molded.
15. A method of manufacturing glass gobs in which glass gobs are formed from a glass melt flowing out of a nozzle, characterized in that:  
prior to dripping from the nozzle, the glass melt flowing out is brought into contact with a support member beneath the lower end of the glass melt flowing out of the nozzle, the support member is then moved downward from beneath the lower end of the glass melt at a speed greater than the flow speed of the glass melt, causing a glass gob of prescribed weight to drip onto the support member from the nozzle.
16. The method of manufacturing glass gobs according to claim 15, further characterized in that the support member is moved downward in such a manner that contact is temporarily broken between the support member and the lower end of the glass melt.
17. The manufacturing method according to claim 15 or 16, further characterized in that the glass glob that has dripped is rendered spherical on the support member or after being moved to the glass forming member from the support member.
18. The manufacturing method according to any of claims 15 to 17, further characterized in that the difference between the softening point and the glass transition temperature of the glass is less than or equal to 100°C.

19. The method of manufacturing glass gobs according to any of claims 15 to 18, further characterized in that the glass gob is a preform for press molding.
20. A method of manufacturing optical elements, characterized in that a preform for press molding manufactured by the manufacturing method according to claim 19 is heat softened and press molded.